

Dear Fifth Grade Parent:

We look forward to meeting you and your student! We hope that this will eventually lead to a decision to join our AWESOME band program at Staley Middle School! Our hope is that we can put each student on the instrument they want to play. However, there are three very important things we would like you to keep in mind as you talk over with your child their instrument choices in preparation for meeting with us.

First, not everyone is physically suited to play the instrument they may have as their first choice. These are some of the major factors we consider:

- FLUTE – Thinner, round lips get the clearest, best sound on flute. A “tear drop” interferes with the air stream and often prevents a clear sound.
- CLARINET – Width of fingers is important. A clarinetist’s fingers must be large enough to cover tone holes, which get larger toward the bottom of the instrument.
- SAXOPHONE – Size of hands. Many students who want to play sax find that their hands are not large enough to fit around a sax without hitting the keys that protrude from its sides. **Alto Sax is also one of the most expensive instruments in band to rent.**
- TRUMPET – Thinner lips that “buzz” well. It is also nice for trumpet players to be good melody matchers.
- FRENCH HORN – You must be able to match pitch to play horn. We really look at the first section of the Selmer Test. One button on horn can play eight pitches!! Therefore, you must have pretty good ears.
- TROMBONE - Length of arms!! Fuller lips are better for the bigger mouthpiece, but your arms must be able to get that slide out to sixth or seventh position! Good ears are helpful.
- EUPHONIUM – Fuller lips are important like on a trombone, but arm length is not a consideration since this is a valved instrument.
- TUBA – Responsibility! Tuba players use school-owned instruments that cost \$4,000. They must take care of our tubas!
- PERCUSSION – Coordination!! Natural coordination is necessary to play percussion; otherwise it is very difficult and frustrating. Excellent behavior is also necessary because our percussionists stand every day, which can lead to discipline problems if they are not well-behaved. A background in piano is VERY helpful.

Second, if a student is well matched to an instrument, playing that instrument will be much easier for them and they will be more successful. If a student wants to play a certain instrument very badly but cannot make a sound, they will be frustrated during the first few weeks of school as they listen to their peers progress while they do not. Many students want to play one instrument but when they try, they can’t make a sound. They quickly switch to another instrument because they can make a sound on it! Please help your child have at least two other choices in mind in case their number one choice doesn’t work out.

Finally, it is necessary for us to balance the number of each instrument in our beginning band. Saxophone and percussion are very popular instruments. You can imagine what our first concert would be like if 60 out of 100 students played either saxophone or percussion. It would not be a very enjoyable concert! Successful bands are well balanced. If we balance well in beginning band, the following years will be fine. We also expect that when we work together with your child to make a decision about their instrument, they will stay with that instrument for all the time they remain in band. We do not encourage switching instruments after sixth grade. Logically, students **will** know how to read music after a year of band, but if they were to switch instruments they **would not** know how to assemble it correctly, how to finger different notes or how to make a quality sound. To learn these would mean repeating beginning band.

ALL students must be screened individually by a band director to be placed in a beginning band class!